

United States Senate

November 20, 2019

COMMITTEES

HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND
PENSIONS

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION

HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL
AFFAIRS

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Wheeler,

I write to express my concerns with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) announcement that it would end operations at its Las Vegas Finance Center (LVFC) on March 21, 2020. This proposed closure would jeopardize the job security and livelihoods of 16 dedicated Nevada employees, as well as their families and local communities. The misguided decision to shutter this well-performing facility follows two other Las Vegas EPA office closures in 2017 and 2018, affecting approximately 70 career EPA employees in Southern Nevada.

As you know, the EPA's Las Vegas Finance Center fulfills funding and monitors payments for critical EPA grants across the nation, including in Nevada. The 16 employees at this office - some of whom have worked and lived in Las Vegas for over thirty years - serve the Agency's mission to protect human health and the environment by tracking and conducting diligent review of taxpayer resources and ensuring that the EPA's finances are well managed and responsibly utilized.

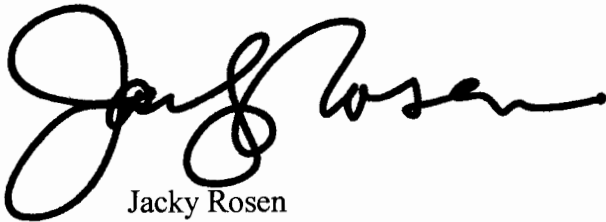
I am troubled by the EPA's decision to close the Las Vegas Finance Center, particularly given that Congress has not appropriated funds for the EPA to consolidate or close any of its regional offices. Moreover, neither the Las Vegas Finance Center's employees nor Congress have been appropriately consulted or informed of the EPA's decision-making process. It also has come to my attention that the EPA has not answered the majority of questions from current LVFC staff surrounding the proposed closure. Therefore, I respectfully request that you provide me with written answers to the following questions:

1. What is the EPA's intent and purpose for consolidating the Las Vegas Finance Center?
2. Who approved this consolidation?
3. Why is the Agency circumventing Congress' reprogramming and reorganizing requirements that prevent it from consolidating the Center?
4. Has the EPA approved the use of internal appropriations for the Center's consolidation?

5. If the costs of operations was a factor in proposing closure, was LVFC management given the opportunity to prepare a plan that would decrease costs and manpower, allowing the office to continue operations?
6. Why was the Nevada Congressional Delegation not consulted in advance of the EPA's announcement? Did the EPA consult with other local stakeholders or impacted communities before making its decision to close a facility where 16 Nevadans work?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your swift response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jacky Rosen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "R".

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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OFFICE OF THE
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

The Honorable Jacky Rosen
United States Senate
144 Russell Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Rosen:

I write today in response to your November 20, 2019, letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regarding the Las Vegas Finance Center (LVFC).

The EPA's strategy for the LVFC was first raised with the Senate Appropriations Committee per the Conference Report to accompany H.J.Res.31 (Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019) on March 15, 2019. Shifting the location of the work assigned to the LVFC will allow the agency to enhance the delivery of financial services agencywide and increase personnel cross-training and professional growth opportunities, while decreasing long-term costs and agency lease holdings. The LVFC had experienced an unusually high number of retirements and departures and more were expected, greatly impacting this relatively small office. Given the naturally occurring downward trend in workforce, the agency recognized this as an optimal time to better serve the agency by transferring the work done there into the finance centers located in North Carolina and Ohio. Further, the EPA must vacate the space in which the LVFC is housed before March 31, 2020.

Like you, I care deeply about the EPA's employees in Las Vegas and have worked to ensure they are provided with abundant opportunity through this transition. All impacted LVFC personnel received management-directed reassignments to vacant positions within the Research Triangle Park Finance Center in North Carolina or within other Office of the Chief Financial Officer organizations in EPA-owned space in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, Cincinnati, Ohio, or Washington, D.C. The OCFO paid relocation expenses for those LVFC employees who accepted management-directed reassignments and relocated from Las Vegas, Nevada, to Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, Cincinnati, Ohio, or Washington, D.C.

In addition, the OCFO requested and was approved to provide Voluntary Early Retirement Authority and Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments providing voluntary attrition options to minimize the impact on employees who may not want to relocate. Finally, under federal rules, those who choose not to retire or separate will receive selection priority over other applicants for positions not just within the EPA but also in other federal agencies.

If you have further questions, please contact me or your staff may contact Christina Moody in the EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at (202) 564-0260 or moody.christina@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Bloom', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

David A. Bloom
Acting Chief Financial Officer